

against; and it was this that came to pass, and which ended in the Lord's turning and doing them hurt, after he had done them good. It was this foreseen attachment to and worship of idols which led Joshua to declare: "Ye cannot serve the Lord; neither will he forgive your trespasses nor your sins." That is while they were secretly attached to idols. "If," he said in effect, "you worship idols and render them service in common with your worship and service of the Lord, he will reject your service and will not forgive your sins and trespasses even tho you bring the sin-offering before him in all regular and due form. For God is a holy God, and a jealous God. He will not countenance any form of sin, nor will he divide with any other object the worship that is due to him by his people."

We read the history of the ancient people, and wonder at their lack of spiritual perception, and their perverseness in adhering to idols. A little attention to the lesson set before us in this important bit of history and teaching will reveal the fact that the same mixture of idol worship with the formal worship of the true God is as common to-day among the professed people of God as it was then. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," was our Lord's declaration to the people of his day, and it is his solemn word to us now. Attachment to the world and the things of the world, in the Spirit of Mammon worship, is just as vicious and deadly as was the worship of Baal and Ashtorath by the children of Israel.

No formal professors of religion will admit that he is serving idols, and if charged with so doing would say as they of old said: "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve Mammon." No professors of religion will openly and formally renounce the service of God and declare that they purpose to give themselves wholly to the service of Mammon; that is, the gratification of their own lusts—high and low, gross and refined—in connection with an open worldliness.

The deceitfulness of sin is seen in that men persuade themselves that they can at once worship and serve the Lord and hold on to certain forms of worldliness; that covetousness and worldly pleasure, the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eye and the pride of the life may be indulged without apostasy from God; that these things may be indulged and yet their formal worship of God be accepted and their daily and formal petition for the forgiveness of sins be answered. It is worth our while to consider the declaration of the Lord above quoted: "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," and the

declaration of John, "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him" (Matt. 6: 24; I John 2: 15,) with the declaration of Joshua to the idol loving children of Israel: "Ye cannot serve the Lord; neither will he forgive your trespasses nor your sins" (Josh. 24: 19.) The principle involved in both the Old and the New Testament declarations is the same. This is a most solemn matter, and ought to awaken our serious consideration.

The practical truths gathered from the consideration of this principle are: *First*, That the indulgence of any known sin sets up, in the worshiper's heart a moral inability to serve the Lord. There may be the pretense of worship; the pious forms may be regularly gone through with; the Bible may be daily read; the prayer may be daily said; the language of worship may be maintained on the lips; the different outward acts of service may be performed; but it is a "vain oblation," and God does not accept it. The formal worshiper is a hypocrite both to God and to himself, though he may be so blinded by his sin that he does not know it. Moreover, the mixture of worldliness with the ostensible service of God may be so common throughout the professing church that the hypocrisy is not noted by others. What a terrible thing is this! What an awakening will come by and by, when the door is shut upon all such, and to the vain and despairing cry, "Lord, Lord, open unto us," comes back the answer, "I never knew you." It will be in vain that we plead: "Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils;" for it will be then manifested that all our prophesying and service in the name of God was worthless, because, in fact, we had forsaken the Lord to serve the idols of our own selfish hearts, supposing that these beloved lusts and worldly ambitions might be safely indulged so long as we kept up a formal worship of God and a fair show of service in the flesh. *Second*, The indulgence of some sins or even of one sin prevents the forgiveness of all other sins. "Neither will he forgive your trespasses nor your sins." We are ready and anxious to confess many sins and we earnestly plead the divine forgiveness for them. At the same time we hold fast by some secret or self-excused form of sin which we do not confess. This is to demonstrate our insincerity and to make a mock of God's holy jealousy, and to cut us off from his mercy. It was this kind of thing indulged in by Israel that was in the mind of the Spirit when he inspired Solomon to declare: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his de-

light." (Prov. 15, 8; compare Is. 1, 11, 61, 8; Jer. 6, 20; Amos 5, 25; John 4, 24.)

SYSTEMATIC READING.

A number of benevolent persons have at different times prepared lists of what they regarded as "the best hundred books." Literary journals with equal benevolence have published these lists of good books and gravely advised their readers to read them all. The youthful Edison in his boyish passion for knowledge decided to read an entire library and actually began at one end of the first shelf. He read every book for about a yard along the shelf—and stopped. The plan did not work. It is equally unwise to attempt to read any selected list of hundred best books, be they never so wisely selected, because the best book may not be precisely the best book for any particular person to read. In a large and general way there are a few great books that every man, woman, and child should own, read, mark, and inwardly digest. "The Book" is one, but the moment we get away from the first few (say ten) of the best hundred books there arise many grave doubts as to whether the remaining best books are the best for us all.

Clearly there is a better way. Books are tools. The thing to know is to know what tool is the best for a particular purpose. The object sought in reading books is education and the kind of education decides what are the best books. Plainly books on building and architecture are better for a carpenter than books on grammar and music. What, then, is your object in reading good books? Is it to be a first-rate carpenter or to be a man of education as well as a carpenter?

The best way is to read certain books arranged in a certain definite order and to read them in a fixed period of time. The young reader who cheerfully sets out to read the whole of any one of these lists of one hundred best books is courageous, but not precisely wise, because he is not likely to carry out his noble resolve. Long before he reaches the fiftieth book he will find there are others of more value to him. He will soon see that it is simple common sense to read these books and finish the list at a more convenient season, which often never comes. A few books arranged along a definite line, a few books read in a definite time—this is the fine art of reading.—*Editor's Outlook, in the Chautauquan for September.*

If a fellow takes the trouble to flatter he expects to be paid for it, and he calculates that he will get his wages out of the soft brains of those he tickles.—*Spurgeon.*